



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

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For More Information Contact:
CMA Public Affairs (410) 436-4555
ABCDF Public Affairs (410) 436-5253

ABCDF Processes Final Batch of Mustard Agent Drained from Last Aberdeen Container *Making a Safer Maryland Today*

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. — Today, workers at the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (ABCDF), located at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), achieved a major milestone when the last batch of mustard agent was neutralized by the facility. This marks the end of draining and neutralizing APG's chemical agent stockpile, making a safer Maryland today.

Maryland is the first state in the continental United States to process the drained contents of its stockpile and to have the risk posed by a chemical agent stockpile eliminated.

"This is a great day for the people of Maryland and for the global chemical weapons disarmament effort," said U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) Director Michael Parker. He added, "A stockpile of steel containers holding one of the world's most lethal substances since 1941 has now been safely destroyed. The safety threat to the local community is gone and the worldwide threat of chemical weapons further reduced."

"We had to overcome a series of technical challenges starting up a first-of-a-kind plant, but a combined work force of 500 government and Bechtel team contractor personnel rose to the occasion and resolved each and every issue," explained Edgewood Chemical Activity (ECA) and ABCDF Commander Lt. Col. Gerald L. Gladney. "Through it all, though, the workers did their jobs safely and brought us to this moment with a real sprint at the finish."

Workers at the facility began destroying the stockpile in April 2003. It took 18 months to drain and destroy the first half of the liquid agent; the second half took slightly more than four months.

The ABCDF work force had many partners in this effort, according to Army Site Project Manager Joe Lovrich. "I look back with tremendous pride considering the many people that have worked tirelessly to convert a technology developed in an Army laboratory to a multi-acre industrial complex designed to safely destroy one of the nation's stockpiles of chemical weapons. Our success in reaching this milestone is a direct result of our partnerships with countless APG installation organizations, environmental regulators, emergency response agencies and the citizens of Maryland who endured the presence of the stockpile for more than 60 years."



For more information,
contact the
Edgewood Chemical
Stockpile Outreach Office

Woodbridge Station
1011-B Woodbridge Center Way
Edgewood, MD 21040

(410) 676-6800 or
www.cma.army.mil

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“At our groundbreaking ceremony, six years ago this June,” recalled Bechtel Defense & Space President Jan Van Prooyen, “the Bechtel Aberdeen team committed itself to providing the community, the Army and our nation with safe, disciplined, environmentally compliant chemical disposal. Now, thanks to the dedication of several hundred men and women – most of them Marylanders – who have been part of this multi-company team, I can acknowledge with pride that Bechtel Aberdeen has delivered on that commitment.”

The steel containers that held the agent continue to be cleaned of residual agent solids, cut in half and decontaminated at the ABCDF’s Ton Container Cleanout Facility. The last remnants of the stockpile, agent residue in the ton containers, referred to as the heel, are being removed using a high-pressure spray wash in this facility. These operations are scheduled for completion next winter. The entire facility will then enter a closure phase in which plant equipment is dismantled and decontaminated.

In addition to this historical occasion, CMA, Maryland and the United States achieved another significant milestone earlier this week. On Tuesday, inspectors from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) completed a final inspection of ECA’s Chemical Agent Storage Yard (CASY) and confirmed that all mustard agent-filled ton containers had been removed from storage. This completed ECA’s obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty for CASY. No future inspections of the CASY by the OPCW are required.

Currently, chemical weapons disposal operations in Utah, Maryland, Alabama, Oregon, and on Johnston Island where operations were completed in November 2000, have resulted in the safe destruction of more than 35 percent of the nation’s declared chemical weapons stockpile involving 42 percent of originally declared munitions. Aberdeen Proving Ground is the first of eight U.S. Army stockpile sites in the continental United States to have emptied its stockpile storage area, eliminating the risk the stored agent posed to its surrounding communities during the past six decades. Disposal operations are set to begin in Arkansas and Indiana in the next couple of months.



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More information on these stockpile sites and the U.S. Army’s chemical demilitarization program, as well as photographs of the final batch transfer can be found at www.cma.army.mil.

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To schedule an interview, please contact CMA or ABCDF Public Affairs.

The U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency is responsible for safely storing and eliminating the United States’ aging chemical weapons and agent stockpiles and for the safe elimination of recovered chemical materiel.